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SUBJECT: ANGOLA - ELECTORAL PROCESS NOVEMBER UPDATE

11. (U) SUMMARY

--Registration Process Drawing Crowds
--Observers Slowly Becoming Accredited
--Some Minor Glitches
--Too Many Political Parties in Angola?
--National Council for Social Communication Constituted

Registration Process Continues Apace

12. (U) The GRA staged major publicity campaigns to encourage potential voters to participate in the registration program, resulting in thousands of people lining up daily during the first week of registration. The GRA is distributing large quantities of leaflets and posters in all urban centers, along with T-shirts, baseball caps and flyers. Private and state-run media services continue to run government paid advertisements encouraging registration. During week one of the registration process, the government daily Jornal de Angola ran daily human interest stories featuring testimonials of young Angolans who have successfully registered to vote, as well as focus pieces on electoral brigade workers.

Observers Slowly Becoming Accredited

13. (SBU) NGO groups have succeeded in the past week in receiving GRA accreditation for additional observers in the provinces. According to information provided to the Embassy by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the number of accredited observers in the provinces increased from 37 on November 15, the first day of the registration process, to 128 observers in seven provinces by November 22. Angolan NGOs have had difficulty in securing the timely accreditation of observers as the National Electoral Commission (NEC) issued instructions on the observer accreditation process less than one week before the registration process began. In addition, a pre-requisite for accreditation is a police clearance - a legitimate requirement, but one which can take weeks or months to secure and which costs between USD 25-40, a significant financial burden for some groups. Comment: While the GRA is encouraging observer participation, it didn't focus on this issue early enough in the registration campaign preparations to allow sufficient ramp-up time for the NGOs and provincial authorities to be informed on and follow the procedures prior to the registration campaign inauguration. End Comment.

14. (U) Embassy Luanda will also be fielding registration observers. Per an official letter from the NEC president, we too will need to follow the official accreditation procedures for each of our observers as outlined in Angolan law 75/05. The Dutch Ambassador told us that he had received a letter from the NEC expressing interest in having EU observers.

Some Minor Glitches

¶5. (U) While the GRA, the opposition and civil society have all deemed the registration process a success so far, some minor incidents have occurred, many of which have been identified by the party election monitors. In Lubango, Huila province, 18 year-old Vasco Daniel was arrested for presenting a forged birth certificate, which was detected by a political party monitor on the scene. PSN monitors in Cazenga-Luanda accused brigade agents of extorting Kwz 500 (about USD 6) from potential voters to expedite registration at a crowded registration post. Cazenga is the largest municipality within Luanda with over 1 million inhabitants.

Too Many Political Parties?

¶6. (U) CNE President Caetano de Sousa warned politicians that democracy and good governance were not determined by large numbers of political parties participating in an electoral process. Speaking at an October 2006 seminar, he noted that "Angola has too many political parties, most having the same ideological orientation or no orientation at all." De Sousa called for fewer, but stronger political organizations and suggested that most parties form coalitions before the elections. Angola currently has 105 political parties registered with the Supreme Court of which 12 parties are represented in parliament.

¶7. (U) Angolan law provides parties represented in Parliament annual stipends from the GRA based on their number of seats, while the remaining 93 parties were allocated \$120,000 each in 2006 to assist in organizing for the elections. This is often the only financing available to political parties, thus most political parties can not afford to have registration monitors at the provincial centers. Of the 105 political parties, only 16 have the capacity to monitor the registration process country-wide. In Luanda, 40 parties were able

LUANDA 00001235 002 OF 002

to accredit monitors, but they have had to share accredited monitors in most areas outside Luanda.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: Minister of Territorial Administration Virgilio Fontes Pereira also encouraged the small opposition parties to consolidate if they are to have any expectation of political influence or power in the future. Many of the small parties can be characterized as "mom and pop" political parties, with a very localized base, and no political platform. Many were formed at the time of the 1992 elections in order to qualify for the government stipends to parties. The GRA eliminated stipends to parties not represented in Parliament in 1997. In addition, Angolan electoral law requires that a political party collect signatures from each province for the party to be registered for the upcoming election. This requirement will reduce the number of political parties drastically. End Comment.

National Council for Social Communication Constituted

¶9. The President of the Supreme Court, Cristiano Andre, swore-in members of the newly constituted National Council for Social Communication, on October 17, 2006. The Council will serve as the supervisory body on mass media in Angola, and is tasked with supervision of all media activities, both State and privately run. It also must enforce the new press law regulations. The Council will rule on questions arising on mass media issues and practices in Angola. The Council is made up of 21 members representing the GRA (3); the Supreme Court (1); MPLA (7); UNITA (4); PRS (1); PLD (1); 3 civil society members representing the main churches in Angola, and 3 journalists drawn from print, radio and television media.
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